

The Operating Characteristics of the PTSD Checklist in Detecting PTSD in HIV+ Substance Abusers

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ABSTRACT. The psychometric properties of the PTSD Checklist-Civilian version (PCL-C) were calculated for a population of HIV-seropositive individuals, using diagnoses and scores from the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) as the criterion measure. Results indicated rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) higher than that of the general population, with 12.3% of participants meeting criteria for PTSD in the past month. The PCL-C exhibited excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .94 for the whole measure. Receiver Operating Characteristic curve yielded an optimum cut score of 52 to determine the presence of PTSD as measured by the CAPS. This resulted in a sensitivity of .71, a specificity of .84, and a diagnostic efficiency of .82. Although this cut score yielded a slightly higher diagnostic efficiency, the cut score of 50 provided the optimal balance between sensitivity (.86) and specificity (.79).

KEYWORDS. PTSD Checklist, HIV-seropositive, operating characteristics, cut score, psychiatric status rating scales, screening instrument

Investigators have recently begun to examine rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in HIV-seropositive individuals, with preliminary data suggesting that the disorder is highly prevalent in this population. In a study of 61 HIV-positive homosexual/bisexual men, Kelly et al. (1998) found that approximately 36% of participants met criteria for a lifetime diagnosis of PTSD either in relationship to receiving an HIV diagnosis or to other traumatic events. Kimerling et al. (1999) assessed PTSD symptoms in 67 inner-city African American women with HIV and found that 35% likely met full criteria for a current diagnosis of PTSD. In a more recent study, at two county HIV clinics, Martinez, Israelski, Walker, and Koopman (2002) estimated that 42% HIV-seropositive female participants met full diagnostic criteria for current PTSD. As noted by Andrykowski, Cordova, Studts, and Miller (1998), differences in sample characteristics and methodology make it difficult to directly compare PTSD prevalence rates across studies. Nonetheless, the rates documented in these studies are considerably higher than the estimated 7.8% lifetime prevalence of PTSD in the general population (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995), indicating a heightened lifetime risk for the development of this disorder among individuals living with HIV.

Despite increased awareness of the elevated rate of PTSD in this population, available data suggest that many HIV-seropositive individuals are

properties of the PTSD Checklist-Civil for a population of HIV-seropositive persons from the Clinician-Administered measure. Results indicated rates of higher than that of the general population meeting criteria for PTSD in the past excellent internal consistency with a whole measure. Receiver Operating Characteristic curve cut score of 52 to determine the presence of CAPS. This resulted in a sensitivity and diagnostic efficiency of .82. Although the diagnostic efficiency, the cut score between sensitivity (.86) and specificity

HIV-seropositive, operating characteristics of scales, screening instrument

to examine rates of posttraumatic stress disorder in individuals, with preliminary findings highly prevalent in this population. Sexual/bisexual men, Kelly et al. of participants met criteria for a relationship to receiving an HIV diagnosis. Kimerling et al. (1999) assessed rates of PTSD in American women with HIV and for a current diagnosis of PTSD. In HIV clinics, Martinez, Israelski, et al. stated that 42% HIV-seropositive persons met criteria for current PTSD. As a result, and Miller (1998), differences in prevalence make it difficult to directly compare studies. Nonetheless, the rates documented are higher than the estimated 7.8% prevalence in the general population (Kessler, Sonnega, et al., 1997), indicating a heightened lifetime risk of PTSD among individuals living with HIV. The elevated rate of PTSD in this population of HIV-seropositive individuals are

not receiving adequate mental health screening and treatment. In fact, Martinez et al. (2002) found that more than half of participants in their sample who likely met full criteria for PTSD were receiving neither psychotherapy nor any type of psychopharmacological intervention at the time of assessment. Left untreated, this debilitating disorder has the potential to become a chronic intractable condition, to significantly compromise social and/or occupational functioning, and to decrease quality of life (Keane & Barlow, 2002).

Moreover, a growing area of concern, from both individual and health care delivery system perspectives, is the potential adverse impact of PTSD on the health status and health care utilization of HIV-infected individuals (Brief et al., 2004). This concern stems, in part, from a documented association between PTSD and poorer health outcomes in clinical and community samples of HIV-seronegative trauma survivors. Comprehensive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this article, and the reader is referred to other articles for additional information (Friedman & Schnurr, 1995; Green & Kimerling, 2004; Schnurr & Jankowski, 1999).

In brief, in HIV-seronegative trauma survivors PTSD has been linked to poorer self-perceived physical health and functional status (e.g., Schnurr & Spiro, 1999; Zatzick et al., 1997), increased physical health complaints and self-reports of medical illnesses (e.g., Barrett et al., 2002; Boscarino, 1997; Schnurr, Ford, et al., 2000), increased rates of substance use (Brief et al., 2004), increased morbidity (as evidenced by more objective indicators of health such as physician-diagnosed medical conditions and laboratory examination results, e.g., Boscarino & Chang, 1999; Schnurr, Spiro, & Paris, 2000), and higher service utilization rates (e.g., Schnurr, Friedman, Sengupta, Jankowski, & Holmes, 2000). Further, a number of studies have shown that these associations persist even after controlling for other potential confounding variables such as health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking and alcohol use; Boscarino, 1997; Schnurr & Spiro, 1999), demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, education, income; Barrett et al., 2002; Boscarino, 1997; Schnurr & Spiro, 1999), and comorbid psychiatric disorders (e.g., Zatzick et al., 1997). Finally, several recent investigations have demonstrated that PTSD plays a mediational role in the relationship between trauma exposure and physical health (e.g., Schnurr & Spiro, 1999; Taft, Stern, King, & King, 1999; Wagner, Wolfe, Rotnitsky, Proctor, & Erickson, 2000).

Although the data are currently quite limited, there is some evidence of a link between PTSD and poor health status in HIV-infected individuals.

In a study examining PTSD in HIV-seropositive individuals with chronic pain, the disorder was found to be associated with higher ratings of pain intensity and pain-related functional impairment, regardless of health status or other risk factors (Smith, Egert, Winkel, & Jacobson, 2002). In addition, Kimerling et al. (1999) found that HIV-infected women with histories of trauma exposure experienced a more rapid decline in CD4+/CD8+ ratios than those with no trauma history. Among individuals exposed to trauma, those with PTSD showed an even greater decline on these immune parameters than those without the disorder, suggesting the possibility of accelerated HIV disease progression.

Taken together, these findings underscore the importance of systematic screening for PTSD in the HIV-seropositive population. Improved detection of the disorder should offer treatment providers a more complete understanding of factors affecting the mental and physical health of their patients. Better recognition of the disorder might also trigger increased referrals for more comprehensive assessment and specialized mental health treatment, ultimately leading to reductions in PTSD symptoms and their negative impact on physical health, improved psychosocial functioning and quality of life, and decreased service utilization.

Hence, there appears to be a need for an efficient, psychometrically sound screening measure to detect PTSD in HIV-seropositive individuals that is appropriate for use in both mental health and primary care settings. Ease of use in primary care settings may be especially important given the data provided by Martinez et al. (2002) indicating that a significant number of HIV-seropositive individuals with PTSD may be more likely to have contact with medical than mental health providers. To date, however, researchers have not explored the psychometric properties of potential screening tools for PTSD in this population.

The purposes of our study were to evaluate the diagnostic utility of the PTSD Checklist-Civilian Version (PCL-C) as a screening measure for PTSD in HIV-positive individuals and to provide guidelines for appropriate cut scores to maximize diagnostic efficiency. The PCL-C (Weathers, Litz, Herman, Huska, & Keane, 1993) is a brief, self-administered instrument for assessing PTSD that has been widely used in both research settings and clinical practice. It has shown generally strong convergent and divergent validity (e.g., Blanchard, Jones-Alexander, Buckley, & Forneris, 1996; Mueser et al., 2001; Ruggiero, Del Ben, Scotti, & Rabalais, 2003) and excellent internal consistency and test-retest reliability (e.g.,

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Blanchard et al., 1996; Lang, Laffaye, Satz, Dresselhaus, & Stein, 2003; Mueser et al., 2001; Ruggiero et al., 2003; Smith, Redd, DuHamel, Vickberg, & Ricketts, 1999) across a variety of populations. Prior research also supports the utility of the PCL as a screening tool with diverse populations, including combat veterans, female veterans in primary care, male veterans in ambulatory care, women enrolled in a health maintenance organization, predominantly female motor vehicle accident victims and sexual assault survivors, mothers of pediatric cancer survivors, female breast cancer survivors, and college students (Andrykowski et al., 1998; Blanchard et al., 1996; Dobie et al., 2002; Forbes, Creamer, & Biddle, 2001; Lang et al., 2003; Manne, DuHamel, Gallelli, Sorgen, & Redd, 1998; Ruggiero et al., 2003; Spiro, Hankin, Leonard, Stylianou, & Kazis, 2000; Walker, Newman, Dobie, Ciechanowski, & Katon, 2002). In fact, when PCL results are validated against diagnostic status on such "gold standard" structured interviews as the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS; Blake et al., 1990) and the Structured Clinical Interview for *DSM-IV* (SCID; First, Spitzer, Gibbon, & Williams, 2002), diagnostic efficiency has generally been shown to be high ranging from approximately 0.8 to 0.9 (e.g., Andrykowski et al., 1998; Blanchard et al., 1996; Forbes et al., 2001; Manne et al., 1998; Spiro et al., 2000).

In a companion study to this research, Cuevas and colleagues (2006) examined the construct validity and factor structure of the PCL among HIV-seropositive individuals who also have substance use and psychiatric disorders. The results indicated that the PCL is psychometrically sound when used to screen for PTSD. Furthermore, the PCL demonstrated high internal consistency for the overall scale as well as for each of the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual for Mental Disorders* (4th ed. [*DSM-IV*]; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) established symptom clusters. The significant and moderate correlations between the PCL and measures of other psychological variables (e.g., depression, anxiety, and hostility) that are often related to PTSD symptomatology supported its construct validity.

Besides the PCL-C, there are currently two other brief screens that have been used in primary care settings with positive results. Using a seven-item screening scale (Breslau, Peterson, Kessler, & Schultz, 1999), Kimerling et al. (2006) reported a high test-retest reliability ($r = .84$) and increased detection of previously unrecognized PTSD in primary care clinics at a large medical center. The short screening scale was empirically derived from interview items in a large epidemiological

telephone survey that best discriminated respondents with a PTSD diagnosis. The Primary Care PTSD Screen (Prins et al., 2003) is a four-item measure derived from factor analyses that identified four underlying factors specific to the PTSD construct. The Primary Care PTSD Screen is mandated in Veterans Affairs (VA) settings and has demonstrated excellent reliability, sensitivity, and specificity among patients with substance use disorders (Kimerling, Trafton, & Nguyen, 2006). In addition to being significantly briefer and less comprehensive than the PCL, both screens omit specific trauma probe questions. Although there are limited published data on these measures, they appear to be psychometrically sound screens for PTSD with this identified population and setting.

Noteworthy, however, is the fact that studies examining the validity of the PCL in different populations have recommended varying cut scores for optimum diagnostic efficiency. Utilizing the *DSM-III-R* (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) diagnostic criteria for PTSD, the original PCL validation study yielded a suggested cut score of 50 based on a sample of male Vietnam veterans (Weathers et al., 1993). In contrast, most subsequent studies have used *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) diagnostic criteria to assess PTSD in samples of male and/or female veterans or civilians with various types of trauma exposure, often noncombat in nature. These later studies have typically recommended lower cut points, ranging from 30 to 45 (Andrykowski et al., 1998; Blanchard et al., 1996; Dobie et al., 2002; Lang et al., 2003; Manne et al., 1998; Ruggiero et al., 2003; Spiro et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2002). A number of factors have been suggested to account for these observed discrepancies in suggested cut scores, including differences on demographic variables (e.g., gender), type and severity of trauma exposure, recency of exposure, and severity and complexity of PTSD symptoms (Blanchard et al., 1996; Walker et al., 2002). Overall, these data highlight the necessity to validate the PCL for use as a screening measure in new populations, such as those diagnosed with HIV, and to establish population-specific cut scores.

In summary, although there appears to be a high prevalence of PTSD among dually diagnosed HIV-seropositive individuals, brief and accurate screening measures for PTSD have not been thoroughly validated with this population. The primary purpose of this article was to evaluate the civilian version of the PTSD Checklist (PCL-C) as a screening measure to assess for symptoms of PTSD during the past month. A secondary goal was to identify the optimal PCL-C cutoff score for this population.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 57 HIV-seropositive patients from the Infectious Disease (ID) Clinics of two urban medical centers (an inner-city public hospital and a VA Medical Center) who were enrolled in a multisite study focusing on HIV/AIDS treatment adherence, health outcomes, and cost. Inclusion criteria for the study were a diagnosis of substance abuse and/or dependence in the past year and the presence of at least one of nine possible Axis I disorders or antisocial or borderline personality disorders.

Measures

PCL-C. The PCL (Weathers et al., 1993) is a 17-item self-administered questionnaire based on the *DSM-IV* criteria for PTSD. The PCL includes symptoms from all three symptom clusters of PTSD: re-experiencing (5 symptoms), numbing/avoidance (7 symptoms), and hyperarousal (5 symptoms). On the PCL-C, participants are instructed to rate the degree to which they have been bothered by given symptoms in response to a "stressful life experience" during the past month, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). The sum of all responses can range from 17 to 85.

The original version of the PCL was developed and validated for use with combat veterans. The PCL has also been used to measure PTSD symptoms in a variety of populations including college students (Ruggiero et al., 2003), motor vehicle accidents and sexual trauma (Blanchard et al., 1996), cancer and medical treatment survivors (Andrykowski et al., 1998; Cordova et al., 1995; Jacobsen et al., 1998; Smith et al., 1999), mothers of pediatric cancer patients (Manne et al., 1998), female veterans in primary care (Lang et al., 2003), primary care patients (Stein, McQuaid, Pedrelli, Lenox, & McCahill, 2000) and outpatient clients (Ventureyra, Yao, Cottraux, Note, & Mey-Guillard, 2002). The PCL-C has shown excellent internal consistency, with alphas regularly reported above .90 (Blanchard et al., 1996; Weathers et al., 1993) and test-retest reliability to be .96 (Weathers et al., 1993). Diagnostic utility using a "gold standard" measure, such as the CAPS (Blake et al., 1995) or the PTSD module of the SCID (First et al., 2002), has reportedly ranged from .79 to .90 with different populations and varying cutoff or "cut" scores ranging from 30 to 50 (Blanchard et al., 1996; Dobie et al., 2002; Forbes et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2002).

ated respondents with a PTSD diagnosis (Prins et al., 2003) is a four-item scale that identified four underlying constructs. The Primary Care PTSD Screen (A) settings and has demonstrated good specificity among patients with PTSD (Trafton, & Nguyen, 2006). In addition, it is less comprehensive than the PCL, but it has more probe questions. Although there are concerns about its psychometric properties, they appear to be psychometrically sound within this identified population and

that studies examining the validity of the recommended varying cut scores. Utilizing the *DSM-III-R* (American Psychiatric Association) criteria for PTSD, the original recommended cut score of 50 based on a sample of combat veterans (Weathers et al., 1993). In contrast, most studies using the *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association) criteria for PTSD in samples of male and/or female veterans, often studies have typically recommended a cut score of 45 (Andrykowski et al., 1998; Blanchard et al., 2002; Lang et al., 2003; Manne et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2002). A goal of this study was to account for these observed discrepancies, including differences on demographic characteristics and severity of trauma exposure, recency of trauma exposure, and severity of PTSD symptoms (Blanchard et al., 1996). In addition, these data highlight the necessity of a screening measure in new populations, and to establish population-specific

to be a high prevalence of PTSD among these individuals, brief and accurate screening measures have not been thoroughly validated with this population. One of the goals of this article was to evaluate the utility of the PCL-C as a screening measure for PTSD in the past month. A secondary goal was to establish a cutoff score for this population.

CAPS. The CAPS (Blake et al., 1995; Blake et al., 1990) is a semistructured interview designed to assess core and associated symptoms of PTSD as described by the *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The CAPS includes questions designed to assess the 17 symptoms of PTSD, as well as symptoms frequently associated with PTSD, such as anxiety, depression, guilt, homicidality, and suicidality (Wolfe & Keane, 1993). The interviewer is instructed to provide ratings for frequency and intensity of each symptom, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4. These ratings yield both dichotomous diagnostic information about PTSD (i.e., present vs. not present) as well as continuous symptoms scores.

Although there are at least nine established CAPS scoring rules to date (Blanchard et al., 1995; Weathers, Ruscio, & Keane, 1999), this study used the original scoring rule (frequency ≥ 1 , intensity ≥ 2) to determine symptom presence (Blake et al., 1995; Blake et al., 1990). This "one/two" rule has been described as the most suitable to avoid false negatives and is a simple scoring procedure which would be appropriate for routine clinical use (Weathers et al., 1999). The diagnosis of PTSD in the past month requires that all *DSM-IV* diagnostic criteria be met including trauma exposure; the minimum, necessary endorsement of symptoms from the respective clusters (reexperiencing, avoidance, hyperarousal); functional impairment; and symptom duration of at least 1 month.

The CAPS has shown excellent interrater agreement, with coefficients ranging from .52 to .99 for symptom clusters (Weathers, Keane, & Davidson, 2001). Kappa coefficients for diagnostic agreement have typically been above .75 (Weathers et al., 2001), and internal consistency (alpha) has generally been above .80 for the full scale. Validity for the CAPS has been supported by significant correlations with other measures of PTSD (e.g., Mississippi Scale, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory Posttraumatic Stress Disorder scale, and SCID symptoms). Diagnostic agreement for the CAPS with the SCID has rendered kappas between .65 and .75 (Weathers et al., 2001).

Procedures

Participants were interviewed by a masters- or doctoral-level evaluator trained in administering the assessment measures. The SCID-I (First et al., 2002) and SCID-II (First, Spitzer, Gibbon, & Williams, 1997) were administered to determine Axis I and II disorders, respectively.

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Evaluators administered the CAPS to assess for PTSD, and participants were asked to complete the PCL-C independently to provide information about symptom severity for PTSD. Training for the SCID and the CAPS was done by licensed clinical psychologists at the National Center for PTSD who specialized in standardized psychosocial assessments. Evaluators were then approved, supervised, and evaluated on the SCID and the CAPS by an onsite assessment supervisor throughout the length of the study.

RESULTS

Descriptives

The average age of participants ($N = 57$) was 41.6 years. Slightly more than two thirds of the sample were men, and slightly more than half of the participants were African American, with Latinos/Hispanics and Caucasians accounting for 17.5% and 21.1%, respectively. Of the 11 (19.3%) participants who met criteria for PTSD in the past year, 7 (12.3%) also met criteria for the past month. Those participants who met criteria for the past month were considered "PTSD positive" for the purpose of examining the diagnostic utility of the PCL-C. All participants completed the PCL-C, but 3 participants either refused to start or complete the CAPS. Additional sample descriptives are presented in Table 1.

The most frequently endorsed traumatic events were life threatening illnesses or injuries (80.7%), physical assaults (79.0%), and transportation accidents (63.2%). Detailed information regarding these and other traumatic events are presented in Table 2. PCL-C summary scores ranged from 17 to 72 ($M = 42.1$, $SD = 15.5$), and although women exhibited significantly higher PCL-C scores ($M = 49.9$, $SD = 14.1$) than men ($M = 39.0$, $SD = 15.1$), $t(51) = 2.4$, $p = .02$, gender was not significantly associated with PTSD diagnoses, $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = .64$, $p = .42$. As expected, individuals diagnosed with PTSD had significantly higher PCL-C scores ($M = 62.1$, $SD = 10.1$) than those without the diagnosis ($M = 39.7$, $SD = 13.9$), $t(48) = 4.1$, $p < .001$.

Performance of the PCL-C

The internal consistency of the entire PCL-C (Cronbach's alpha) was .94. At the symptom cluster level, alphas for reexperiencing, avoidance, and hyperarousal were .90, .86, and .82, respectively. The overall correlation of

TABLE 1. Sample descriptives

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	40	70.2
Female	17	29.8
Ethnicity		
African American	31	54.4
Latino/Hispanic	10	17.5
Caucasian/European American	12	21.1
Native American	2	3.5
Other	2	3.5
Marital status		
Never married	38	66.7
Married	1	1.8
Widowed	1	1.8
Separated	9	15.8
Divorced	8	14.0
Sexual orientation		
Straight/Heterosexual	38	66.7
Gay/Homosexual	8	14.0
Bisexual	10	17.5
Undecided/In transition/Not sure	1	1.8
Diagnostic categories		
Major depression	36	63.2
Dysthymia	4	7.0
Bipolar (I or II)	11	19.3
Panic d/o	9	16.8
PTSD (past year)	11	19.3
GAD ^a	3	5.3
Adjustment d/o ^b	0	0.0
Mood d/o with psychotic features	7	12.3
Nonmood psychotic d/o	18	31.6
Borderline personality d/o	15	26.3
Antisocial personality d/o	28	49.1
Substance use d/o diagnosis		
Alcohol dependence/Abuse only	3	5.3
Drug dependence/Abuse only	21	36.8
Both alcohol and drug diagnosis	33	57.9

Note. Age range in years = 30–60 ($M = 41.6$, $SD = 6.35$); education range in years = 5–16 ($M = 11.5$, $SD = 2.20$). PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder. ^aIf Major Depression or Dysthymia present in past year, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) was not assessed. ^bIf any other Axis I disorder was diagnosed, adjustment disorder was not assessed.

e descriptives

TABLE 2. Lifetime trauma exposure in study participants

<i>n</i>	%
40	70.2
17	29.8
31	54.4
10	17.5
12	21.1
2	3.5
2	3.5
38	66.7
1	1.8
1	1.8
9	15.8
8	14.0
38	66.7
8	14.0
10	17.5
1	1.8
36	63.2
4	7.0
11	19.3
9	16.8
11	19.3
3	5.3
0	0.0
7	12.3
18	31.6
15	26.3
28	49.1
3	5.3
21	36.8
33	57.9

M = 41.6, *SD* = 6.35; education *D* = 2.20). PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder or Dysthymia present in past 12 months. (GAD) was not assessed. ^bIf any other anxiety disorder was not

Event	Experienced <i>n</i> (%)	Witnessed <i>n</i> (%)	Learned About <i>n</i> (%)
Natural disaster	18 (31.6)	13 (22.8)	14 (24.6)
Fire/explosion	15 (26.3)	18 (31.6)	25 (43.9)
Transportation accident	36 (63.2)	32 (56.1)	40 (70.2)
Serious accident	13 (22.8)	16 (28.1)	24 (42.1)
Toxic substances	5 (8.8)	6 (10.5)	11 (19.3)
Physical assault	45 (79.0)	47 (82.5)	44 (77.2)
Assault with a weapon	33 (57.9)	38 (66.7)	41 (71.9)
Sexual assault	16 (28.1)	8 (14.0)	27 (47.4)
Unwanted sexual experience	18 (31.6)	10 (17.5)	22 (38.6)
Combat/war zone	4 (7.0)	9 (15.8)	25 (43.9)
Captivity	6 (10.5)	6 (10.5)	9 (15.8)
Life-threatening illness	46 (80.7)	37 (64.9)	41 (71.9)
Severe suffering	20 (35.1)	23 (40.4)	26 (45.6)
Sudden violent death	N/A	22 (38.6)	33 (57.9)
Death of someone close	N/A	31 (54.4)	41 (71.9)
Harm caused	8 (14.0)	20 (35.1)	23 (40.4)
Other	4 (7.0)	3 (5.3)	4 (7.0)

Note. N/A = not applicable.

the PCL-C total score with the CAPS total severity score was significant, $r(50) = 0.63, p < .001$.

Using the recommended cutoff score of 50 (Weathers & Ford, 1996), the PCL-C accurately diagnosed 85.7% (6 of 7) of the individuals with PTSD and 79.1% (34 of 43) of the individuals without PTSD, yielding a sensitivity score of 0.86 and a specificity score of 0.79. Using this cut score, overall diagnostic efficiency was .80. Additional prediction parameters from this and other studies using the PCL are presented in Table 3.

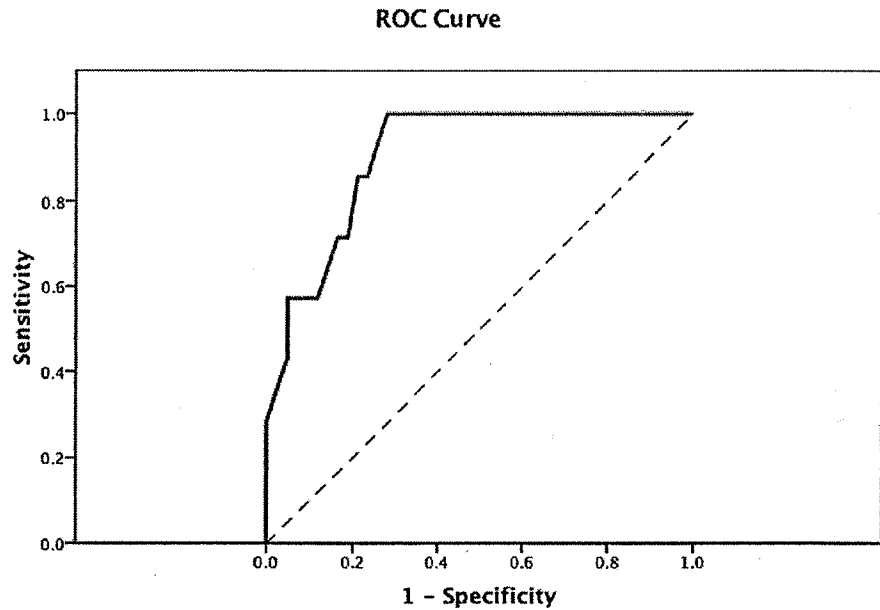
For continuous measures, such as the PCL-C, receiver operating characteristic (ROC) methods have been used in clinical settings to transform the range of scores into a dichotomous outcome (e.g., having or not having a particular diagnosis, such as a PTSD diagnosis by the CAPS). The ROC curve plots sensitivity versus (1-specificity) to provide a measure of the overall accuracy of the scale (Sackett, Haynes, & Tugwell, 1985) and to help identify the ideal cut point that maximizes the detection of true positives and true negatives. The area under the curve for the PCL-C compared with CAPS diagnosis was .91 (95% CI = .81-.99; see Figure 1).

TABLE 3. Diagnostic utility of the PTSD Checklist (PCL)—Civilian Version across various studies

Source	N	PCL Cut Score	Sensitivity	Specificity	Positive Predictive Power	Negative Predictive Power	Diagnostic Efficiency
HIV + substance users ^a	57	50	.86	.79	.40	.97	.80
Current sample		52 ^b	.71	.84	.42	.95	.82
Breast cancer ^a	82	30 ^c	1.00	.83	.24	.10	.80
(Andrykowski et al., 1998)							
Motor vehicle accident, sexual assault ^a	40	44 ^c	.94	.86	.85	.95	.90
(Blanchard et al., 1996)							
Female veterans ^a	282	38 ^c	.79	.79	—	—	—
(Doble et al., 2002)							
Vietnam combat veterans ^a	97	50 ^b	.91	.40	.85	.93	.80
(Forbes et al., 2001)							
Female veterans in primary care ^d	49	28–30 ^c	.94–.78	.68–.71	—	—	.78–.74
(Lang et al., 2003)							
Mothers of pediatric cancer ^{a,c}	65	50 ^b	.75	.89	.30	.98	.88
(Manne et al., 1998)							
College students	392	44 ^{b,f}	.90	.95	.70	.99	.95
(Ruggiero et al., 2003)							
Male VA ambulatory patients	469	42 ^c	.89	.90	.42	.91	.90
(Siro et al., 2000)							
Adults in primary care ^b	132	— ^f	.32	.94	.42	.91	—
(Stein et al., 2000)							
French PTSD & nonclinical participants	113	44 ^b	.97	.87	.97	.87	.94
(Ventureyra et al., 2002)							
HMO sample of women ^a	261	30 ^c	.82	.76	.28	.97	—
(Walker et al., 2002)							
Ours	50	50	.86	.79	.40	.97	.80
Vietnam veterans ^c (N = ????)	50 ¹	50 ¹	.82	.84			
(Weathers & Ford, 1996)							

Note. ^aClinician-Administered PTSD Scale was the criterion measure used. ^bRecommended PCL cut score. ^cDerived PCL cut score. ^dComposite International Diagnostic Interview v2.1- PTSD section was the criterion measure used. ^eStructured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV was the criterion measure used. ^fSymptom cluster method/DSM algorithm PCL cut score used.

FIGURE 1. Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) Curve (Sensitivity vs. [1-Specificity]) for PTSD Checklist Score Versus Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale Diagnosis of PTSD.



Diagonal segments are produced by ties.

This yielded an optimum cut score of 52, which provided a sensitivity of .71, a specificity of .84, and an overall diagnostic efficiency of .82 (see Table 3). Although this cut score yielded a slightly higher diagnostic efficiency, the cut score of 50 provided the optimal balance between sensitivity (.86) and specificity (.79).

DISCUSSION

As expected, there were high rates of traumatic exposure and PTSD in this sample of HIV+ substance abusers. As with primary care clinics and other medical settings (Lang et al., 2003; Stein et al., 2000), an ID Clinic can be a central location or clinical entry point to identify individuals with PTSD. Because assessing dually or multiply diagnosed

College students (Ruggiero et al., 2003)	392	44 ^{b1}	.90	.95	.70	.99	.95
Male VA ambulatory patients (Spiro et al., 2000)	469	42 ^c	.89	.90			.90
Adults in primary care ^b (Stein et al., 2000)	132	— ^f	.32	.94	.42	.91	—
French PTSD & nonclinical participants (Ventureyra et al., 2002)	113	44 ^b	.97	.87	.97	.87	.94
HMO sample of women ^a (Walker et al., 2002)	261	30 ^c	.82	.76	.28	.97	—
Ours Vietnam veterans ^c (N = ????) (Weathers & Ford, 1996)	50 50 ¹	50 50 ¹	.86 .82	.79 .84	.40	.97	.80

Note. ^aClinician-Administered PTSD Scale was the criterion measure used. ^bRecommended PCL cut score. ^cDerived PCL cut score. ^dComposite International Diagnostic Interview v2.1- PTSD section was the criterion measure used. ^eStructured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV was the criterion measure used. ^fSymptom cluster method/DSM algorithm PCL cut score used.

individuals can be diagnostically complicated and resource consuming (Bollinger, Riggs, Blake, & Ruzek, 2000; Read, Bollinger, & Sharkansky, 2003), it can be critical for clinicians working in these settings to have a brief, efficient, and accurate screening measure that can be used to identify at-risk patients. This can then facilitate the appropriate and timely referral to an integrated psychosocial model for delivering HIV/AIDS and mental health treatment (Bollinger, Greene, Soto, & Wagner-Raphael, 2000). The PCL-C has been used as a screening instrument with other medical populations (Lang et al., 2003; Smith et al., 1999; Stein et al., 2000). Our purpose was to examine the utility of the PCL-C as a screening instrument in an ID Clinic with HIV-seropositive adults.

Consistent with previous research, the PCL-C exhibited excellent internal consistency. It also correlated well with CAPS severity scores, although this correlation was not as high as that of other studies (Blanchard et al., 1996). The area under the curve in the ROC analysis was slightly higher than what has been reported in previous research. Whereas other studies have consistently shown area under the curve values ranging from .84 to .89 (Dobie et al., 2002; Lang et al., 2003; Walker et al., 2002), our sample had an area of .91. Finally, the overall diagnostic efficiency (.82) of the PCL-C for this sample was consistent with the majority of previously published studies, which typically indicate diagnostic efficiency to be .74 and above (Andrykowski et al., 1998; Blanchard et al., 1996; Dobie et al., 2002; Forbes et al., 2001; Lang et al., 2003; Manne et al., 1998; Spiro et al., 2000; Ventureyra et al., 2002; Walker et al., 2002).

Overall, the PCL-C performed well in screening for both PTSD and non-PTSD in a mixed sample of dually diagnosed HIV+ adults. Unlike other nonmilitary samples, which typically exhibit lower cut scores, in our sample the PCL-C was most effective with a cut score of 52 for diagnostic efficiency. However, the PCL-C demonstrated the best balance of sensitivity and specificity with a cut score of 50 with only a slight loss in diagnostic efficiency. In other studies deriving optimum cut scores for diagnostic efficiency, scores were typically lower ranging from 28 to 44 (Andrykowski et al., 1998; Blanchard et al., 1996; Dobie et al., 2002; Lang et al., 2003; Ventureyra et al., 2002; Walker et al., 2002).

Although the PCL-C demonstrated excellent internal consistency and a high area under the ROC curve, the overall diagnostic efficiency was not as robust as reported in other studies. There are a number of possible explanations for this. First, this particular sample reported trauma

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histories reflecting a broad diversity of precipitating stressors or Criterion
A events (see Table 2). All of the possible types of traumatic events listed
on the Life Events Checklist (the trauma query used prior to the CAPS
interview) were endorsed by participants as either having been personally
experienced, witnessed, and/or learned about with values ranging from
7% (other) to 80.7% (life threatening illness or injury) of the sample. Sec-
ond, life-threatening illness, physical assaults, and assaults with a weapon
were the most frequently endorsed events (80.7%, 79.0%, and 57.9%,
respectively), which is markedly different from previous studies that
primarily focused on only one predominant traumatic event. Furthermore,
the identified traumatic events in these studies were typically not physi-
cal/weapon assaults or illness, but rather war trauma, sexual assault, and/
or motor vehicle accidents (Blanchard et al., 1996; Dobie et al., 2002;
Forbes et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2002).

It is perhaps also reasonable to consider the degree to which issues
other than PTSD and trauma exposure may impact PCL-C efficacy for
this population. Given the extensive, sustained, and life-threatening health
problems people with HIV/AIDS typically experience, it can often be
difficult to identify the particular "causes" of a given symptom—such as
differentiating symptoms of trauma exposure from symptoms of a chronic
medical condition. Although specific data regarding this phenomenon
were not collected during this study, evaluators reported anecdotal
evidence that participants often had difficulty attributing given symptoms
to a specific source. This is supported to some degree by the Cluster D or
hyperarousal items, which exhibited the lowest reliability. Many of the
questions in this cluster can easily be attributed or due to medical prob-
lems or psychiatric comorbidity (e.g., difficulty sleeping, difficulty
concentrating). In addition, various other questions in the PCL-C could
be attributed to problems related to physical illness or other comorbid
conditions present in this sample (e.g., feeling that life would be cut short,
feeling distant or cut off from others, less interest in activities previously
enjoyable). As part of the study inclusion criteria, the participants also
exhibited significant comorbid mental health conditions (e.g., 63% of the
sample was also diagnosed with major depression), which may have
impacted their response to PCL-C items.

Given the prevalence of trauma exposure and the negative effects of
PTSD on treatment outcomes, adherence, health, and health-related quality
of life in HIV+ adults (Bollinger, Brief, & Keane, 2001; Brief et al., 2004;
Kimerling et al., 1999), there is compelling evidence to screen for PTSD
among ID clinic patients. The PCL-C appears to be effective in screening

for PTSD, and would be helpful in referring at-risk patients for treatment. However, given the complexity of physical illness and symptomatology in this population, caution should be exercised when using the PCL-C as a diagnostic instrument. In addition, because the symptoms of PTSD substantially overlap with those of other anxiety and depressive disorders, awareness of the PCL-C's specificity should be noted. The best use of the PCL-C or other screening measures in dually or multiply diagnosed populations, such as this one, is as a springboard to a more thorough assessment of PTSD and its symptoms (Bollinger et al., 2000; Loranger, 1992; Read et al., 2003).

Several limitations of this study are important to note. First, the generalizability of these results may be limited. Our findings were based on data from dually diagnosed HIV-seropositive adults with current or recent substance use disorders and mental health diagnoses and may not generalize to other samples. Second, our sample consisted of individuals who volunteered for a paid research study, which may reflect qualitative differences from the general ID Clinic population. Although the study was widely advertised within the ID Clinics at both settings, we received inquiries from only approximately 10% of the total number of registered patients. Third, for prospective HIV+ participants to meet study criteria, they were required to have met criteria for both a substance use and a mental health disorder in the past year. As a consequence, the recruitment of dually diagnosed individuals may make the results less generalizable to other HIV populations.

Although it has been documented that cut scores need to be adjusted based on gender and trauma type differences (Blanchard et al., 1996), future research should continue to examine the effects of patient population and clinical/research settings and to determine the ideal derived PCL-C cut score for each type of patient and setting. Furthermore, from a psychometric perspective, the PCL-C could benefit from examining its concurrent validity with other measures, structured interviews, and laboratory-based tests of physiologic reactivity (Watson, 1990) as well as its discriminant validity in this population. Staff in primary care settings typically place a premium on being able to quickly and accurately assess mental disorders (Dobie et al., 2002). To that end, it would be of interest to examine the ways in which the PCL-C compares to other brief PTSD screening measures (Breslau et al., 1999; Connor & Davidson, 1999; Metzler-Brody, Churchill, & Davidson, 1999; Prins et al., 2003). Finally, the longitudinal validity of the PCL-C in measuring

ferring at-risk patients for treatment. Physical illness and symptomatology is exercised when using the PCL-C on, because the symptoms of PTSD over anxiety and depressive disorders, should be noted. The best use of the in dually or multiply diagnosed pop- ingboard to a more thorough assess- llinger et al., 2000; Lorranger, 1992;

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symptomatic change of PTSD symptoms for this population while in treatment (Forbes et al., 2001) would also be of interest. As suggested by Smith and colleagues (1999), the utility of the PCL-C as a screening measure could be greatly improved by including supplementary questions regarding duration of symptoms and their impact on daily functioning.

In summary, the PCL-C appears to be an effective way to screen for PTSD with HIV+ individuals, and positive diagnoses can be corroborated by clinician-administered interviews, as is the case with other disorders that also require extensive assessment, such as personality disorders (Bollinger et al., 2000; Lorranger, 1992). A two-step screening process could provide a more efficient use of clinical resources and time by administering thorough PTSD evaluations only after patients screen positive on the PCL-C. However, further work is necessary to establish an optimal screening tool for ID Clinics. Given the high degree of potential service utilizations by patients with chronic medical conditions (Lang et al., 2003), the ability to identify and subsequently treat PTSD-related symptoms is an important consideration from a cost perspective as well. By addressing PTSD, patients may be better able to attend to the rigorous demands of medical treatment, such as antiretroviral medications, which then may positively affect their health outcomes and quality of life (Brief et al., 2004; Kimerling et al., 1999).

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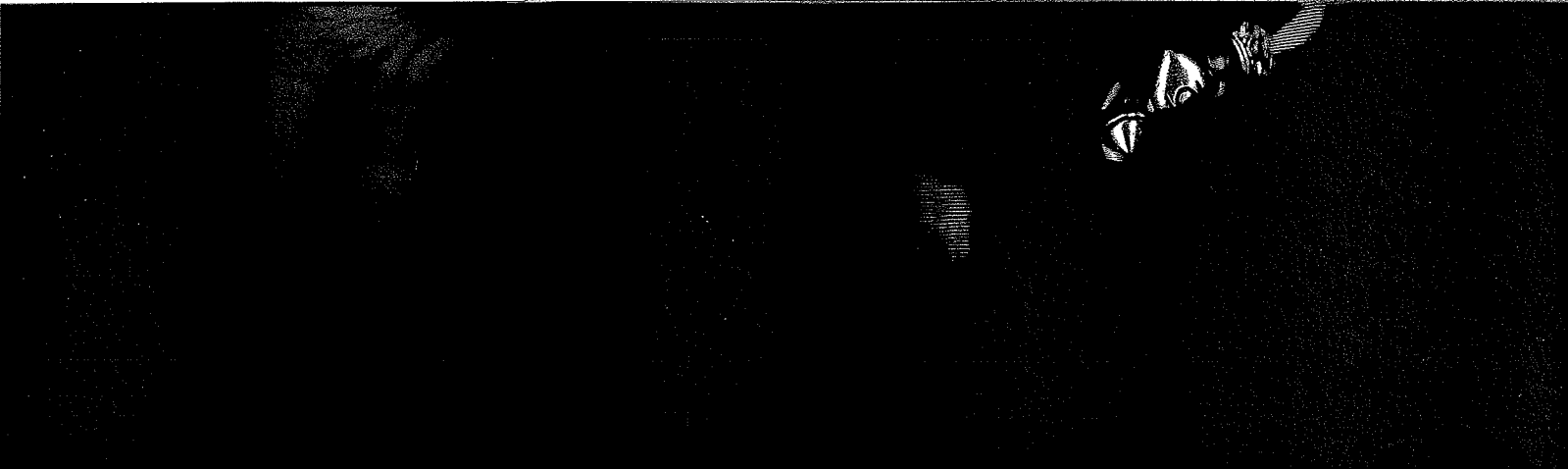
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